

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KABUL 06866 190535Z

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9387

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E. O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EAIR, AF

SUBJECT: SECURITY SITUATION AT KABUL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

REF: STATE 212490

1. IN WAKE OF ISTANBUL AIRPORT TRAGEDY, INFORMAL REVIEW OF KABUL AIRPORT BY EMBASSY SECURITY AND ECON OFFICERS (WITHOUT AFGHAN PARTICIPATION) REVEALS SEVERAL AREAS OF WEAKNESS IN BOTH AIRPORT SECURITY PROCEDURES AND PHYSICAL PLANT. IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THESE DEFECTS MIGHT BE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF BY TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS EITHER TO HIJACK AN AIRCRAFT OR SHOOT UP PASSENGER LOBBY. SPECIFIC PROBLEMS CONCERNING KABUL AIRPORT ARE DISCUSSED BELOW:

A. AFTER IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS PROCEDURES ARE COMPLETED, TICKETED PASSENGERS ARE ROUTED THROUGH ONE OF TWO BOOTHS FOR SECURITY SCREENING AND CHECK OF CARRY-ON BAGGAGE. MOST, BUT NOT ALL, PASSENGERS ARE SCREENED. OUR INFORMATION SUGGESTS THAT SECURITY PROCEDURE RANGES FROM FAIR TO SPOTTY. DIPLOMATS ARE NOT SECURITY SCREENED IN ANY MANNER. IF CONSULTATIONS WITH AFGHAN GOVERNMENT SECURITY OFFICIALS ARE HELD, BELIEVE FAA SPECIALISTS MIGHT RECOMMEND THAT DIPLOMATS CONTINUE TO BE PERMITTED IN TRANSIT AREA, BUT SHOULD BE SECURITY SCREENED IN ORDER TO PREVENT MINGLING OF NON-SCREENED INDIVIDUALS WITH SCREENED PASSENGERS.

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PAGE 02 KABUL 06866 190535Z

B. KABUL AIRPORT GROUNDS, TERMINAL AND AIRFIELD ARE NOT FENCED IN ANY MANNER. GUARDS ARE STATIONED AT EITHER END OF FLIGHT TERMINAL BUILDING AND AT OTHER LOCATIONS, AND SEEM TO DO A REASONABLE JOB OF RESTRICTING ENTRY OF UNAUTHORIZED INDIVIDUALS TO TARMAC. NEVERTHELESS, THE OPENNESS OF THE FIELD DOES RAISE PROBLEMS OF UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS, AND THERE IS SCOPE FOR ABUSE.

C. KABUL AIRPORT OBSERVATION PLATFORM (ROOF OF TERMINAL BUILDING) IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL INDIVIDUALS. THE OBSERVATION DECK IS NOT FENCED OR GLASSED-IN AND AFFORDS EXCELLENT AS WELL AS CLOSE VISIBILITY OF ALL INCOMING AND OUTGOING PASSENGERS.

2. THE EMBASSY HAS SENT A NOTE TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS EXPLAINING OUR CONCERN OVER THE RECENT SPATE OF AIR HIJACKINGS, MENTIONING THAT THE FAA HAS AIR SECURITY SPECIALISTS AVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATION WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND SUGGESTING THAT THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT MIGHT WISH TO HOLD CONSULTATIONS WITH THESE SPECIALISTS CONCERNING THE SECURITY OF THE NEW KABUL (LOGAR) AIRPORT NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION, AS WELL AS TO REVIEW THE SECURITY SITUATION AT THE CURRENT AIRPORT. BECAUSE OF CONFLICTING JURISDICTION AND IN-FIGHTING BETWEEN THE AFGHAN AIR AUTHORITY AND THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ON MATTERS OF AIR SECURITY, WILL ALSO SEEK GUIDANCE FROM MFA ON PROPER AFGHAN AUTHORITY TO COORDINATE WITH ON AIR SECURITY MATTERS SHOULD SUCH CONSULTATIONS PROVE DESIRABLE, FEASIBLE, AND WANTED BY THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT.
ELIOT

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